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- IN SECRETARY RASMO
- TO ALL NATO CAPITALS NIACI IMMEDIATE
- MEMBASSY BEIJING NIACI IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TOKYO NIACT IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 333161

MILITARY ADDRESSEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 12865: 608 12/28/85 (MURNBLON, MICHAEL)
TAGS: PEPK, AF, UK,,US

SUBJECT: OUR ASSESSMENT OF RECENT EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ADDRESSEE POSTS MAY DRAN ON THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION
IN BRIEFING MOST GOVERNMENTS. ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS
HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN SEPTEL.

3. ON DECEMBER 27, AFGHAN PRESIDENT NAFIZULLAH AMIN WAS
DEPOSED AND EXECUTED IN A COUP D'ETAT CLEARLY PLANNED AND
EXECUTED BY THE SOVIET UNION. DURING THE TWO DAYS PRIOR
TO THE COUP A MASSIVE SOVIET AIRLIFT COMPRISING OVER 200
FLIGHTS BROUGHT MEN AND MATERIEL INTO KABUL. ALTHOUGH
THE PRECISE REASON FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE NEW
FORCES WAS NOT CLEAR AT THE TIME, IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT
THE FIRST TASK WAS TO EFFECT A COUP AGAINST AMIN'S GOVERN-
MENT WHICH HAD PROVED INEFFECTIVE AND PERHAPS EMBARRASSING
TO THE SOVIETS.

4. RELIABLE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM KABUL INDICATE THAT
SOVIET TROOPS WERE ENGAGED IN FIGHTING AFGHAN TROOPS AND
OTHERS FOR CONTROL OF RADIO AFGHANISTAN. THE SOVIETS
WERE SEEN TO BE TAKING AFGHAN PRISONERS AND AT LEAST THREE

AFGHAN TANKS STATIONED NEAR THE RADIO BUILDING WERE DES-
TROYED. SOVIET CONVOYS WERE SEEN MOVING TOWARD THE CITY
AND THERE WAS FIGHTING OVER A PERIOD OF HOURS IN THE
VICINITY OF DURULAHAN PALACE, THE RESIDENCE OF AMIN.

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SOVIET TROOPS ARE NOW STATIONED IN KEY INTERSECTIONS
AT KABUL AND IN FRONT OF MANY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

5. OUR INITIAL FINDINGS INDICATE THAT THE FIRST ANNOUNCE-
MENTS OF THE COUP APPEAR TO HAVE COME FROM TRANSMITTERS
IN THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF, AND NOT FROM RADIO AFGHANISTAN
IN KABUL. THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE CLEARLY PRE-RECORDED
AND WERE REPEATED CONTINUOUSLY ON SEVERAL FREQUENCIES PUR-
PORTING TO BE RADIO AFGHANISTAN. ACCORDING TO THESE
ANNOUNCEMENTS, BABRAK KARDEL HAD SUCCEEDED AMIN AND WAS
NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. BABRAK
(WHICH HE IS USUALLY CALLED) WAS FOR MANY YEARS A RIVAL OF
FORMER PRESIDENT TAMARI FOR LEADERSHIP OF AFGHANISTAN'S
MARXIST MOVEMENT. AFTER THE APRIL 1978 COUP BABRAK WAS
NAMED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BUT WITHIN A FEW MONTHS HE
WAS "EXILED" AS AMBASSADOR TO PRAGUE, A POST HE HELD FOR
ONLY SIX WEEKS BEFORE BEING ORDERED BACK TO KABUL. BABRAK
DID NOT RETURN TO KABUL, BUT WE BELIEVE HE REMAINED IN
EASTERN EUROPE UNTIL HIS INSTALLATION BY THE SOVIETS AS
THE NEW AFGHAN PRESIDENT. HE IS KNOWN TO BE A DEDICATED
MARXIST WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THE SOVIETS FOR YEARS, AND
HE WILL PROBABLY BE THOROUGHLY AMENABLE TO SOVIET DIRECTION.
GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS INSTALLATION, BABRAK WILL
CLEARLY BE DEPENDENT ON MOSCOW FOR HIS SURVIVAL.

6. WE HAVE REPORTS FROM KABUL THAT THE SOVIET AIRLIFT IS
CONTINUING. EARLIER IN DECEMBER, AT LEAST THE EQUIVALENT
OF A COMBAT REGIMENT ARRIVED AT BAGRAM AIR FORCE BASE SOME
40 MILES NORTH OF THE CAPITAL. A VERY SUBSTANTIAL BUILDUP
OF SOVIET FORCES IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF THE AFGHAN BORDER
INVOLVING THE ELEMENTS OF AT LEAST FIVE DIVISIONS, SUGGESTS
THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ADDITIONAL MILITARY OBJECTIVES
BEYOND THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. THIS BUILDUP
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INCLUDES LARGE NUMBERS OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS.

7. THE NEW REGIME HAS ALREADY MADE SOME CONCILIATORY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE TO THE AFGHAN PUBLIC AND HAS OFFERED TO NEGOTIATE

WITH VARIOUS INSURGENT GROUPS. HOWEVER, WE EXPECT THAT MOST OF THE INSURGENTS WILL PROBABLY SPURN THESE APPROACHES SINCE THEY ARE LIKELY TO REGARD BABRAJ AS EVEN MORE A CREATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. BABRAJ WILL DOUBTLESS GIVE LIP SERVICE TO NON-ALIGNMENT BUT WILL IN FACT BE PURSUING PRO-SOVIET POLICY AND BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOVIETS IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

8. THE NEW REGIME MAY HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME CO-OPTING ELEMENTS OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT. THE AFGHAN ARMY WHICH WAS ALREADY BADLY DEMORALIZED WILL BE FURTHER SHAKEN BY THIS MOST RECENT COUP AND THERE MAY WELL BE MORE DESERTIONS. THE AFGHAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WAS ALREADY IN SHAMBLES DUE TO THE WIDESPREAD, POPULAR INSURGENCY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE SOVIETS WILL FACE A DIFFICULT TASK IN REBUILDING THE AFGHAN ARMY AND RECONSTRUCTING THE ECONOMY.

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